

The Blemished Priest: Excluded? Instructive?



Getting Started

In his recent discussion paper about future directions for our churches, Rod wrote:

- **L'Arche** – L'Arche (The Ark) provides us with an international model of caring residential communities from which we can learn a great deal. Jean Vanier and others founded L'Arche in France in 1964. By the time of Vanier's death on 7 May 2019, L'Arche had been established in more than 30 countries throughout the world, including Australia. Among L'Arche's aims is "to make known the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities revealed through mutually transforming relationships".

It is our intention to develop inclusive, residential places on the Springwood site. These will be homes in which those who are vulnerable are known, loved, celebrated, and safe. These will be homes embedded in Christian generosity and hospitality. We do not intend becoming members of L'Arche. However we can learn a great deal from the journey L'Arche has taken. The L'Arche Australia website can be found as <https://www.larche.org.au/>

- **The Springwood and Winmalee churches** – over past years our church communities in Winmalee and Springwood have sought to welcome and love those who are vulnerable, and those who have experienced rejection and exclusion within wider society. Consider already existing ministry commitments, including our partnership with Jericho Road, playgroups, Restore meetings, Open Church, and more recently William's Place. Consider the participation of many of our members in caring for refugees, people in prisons, those who are homeless, those who are in nursing homes etc. Our intention to develop inclusive accommodation on the Springwood site is fully in keeping with the way the Lord has been guiding us over the past years.

How do you respond to these words?

Listening to the Bible

1. Read Leviticus 21:10–23. What questions does it raise for you?
2. Does the notion of "blemish" match up with our contemporary notion of "disability"?

One scholar has said that you think you know what disability is until you have to define it. What problems do you find when you try to define "disability"?

What do you think of the idea that people are each "temporarily abled"?

3. In verse 23, the reason for excluding the blemished priest is to do with desecrating the sanctuary. How do you understand this?

What did the OT tabernacle/temple symbolise?

Why must blemish be excluded from the Holy of Holies?

4. In what ways is the blemished priest included in the life of Israel?

What does Lev 19:14 add to this?

5. What is good about people being different?

Read Romans 12:1–8

6. How did the Apostle Paul make a contribution from both his strengths and his weaknesses? Consider 2 Corinthians 11:21–12:10

Can you put 2 Corinthians 12:10 in your own words?

Excursus: Where does Jesus fit?

- *We might want to say that the priest cannot be blemished because Jesus is perfect.*
- *But the priesthood of Jesus is better and different from the Levitical priesthood.*
- *Jesus' body becomes a blemished sacrifice.*
- *The accent on Lev 21 is sacred space: now fulfilled in Jesus who is the place where we meet God.*
- *The church is also an expression of sacred space.*
- *We look forward to a new creation without blemish, because of Jesus.*

Putting it into practice

7. How do people with disabilities make a contribution through strength and weakness? Take a look at these.

Maria Garvey <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqxGEpwXHZc>

Musa Mirokote <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kL75g7fAJ80>

Jerrah Patston <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtOprDa2JbA>

8. How do you contribute to others from your strengths?

How do you contribute to others from your weaknesses?